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SUBJECT: SUDAN - NUBA MOUNTAINS USAID MONITORING TRIP

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SUMMARY

(U) From April 15 to 19, USAID staff visited Southern Kordofan State to monitor USAID-funded water programs in the eastern part of the Nuba Mountains and Dilling locality. The USAID team reported that lack of water is a serious problem in several areas of Southern Kordofan, and additional resources are required to meet existing needs. In addition, the team found that some USAID cash-for-work programs need to adjust payment levels in the near term in response to the local labor market, and review the most appropriate and cost-effective modalities for future water programs. End summary.

WATER FOR RETURNEES

1. (U) Talodi locality in the eastern hills of the Nuba Mountains, Southern Kordofan State, has received a large number of returnees in comparison with other areas. From September 2006 to March 2007, approximately 2,594 returnees arrived in Talodi, according to Save the Children/US (SC/US). Access to safe drinking water for returning populations and constructive engagement with local government authorities relating to water management are significant factors for stability in the Three Areas.

USAID/OFDA WATER PROGRAMS

2. (U) Access to water is a critical issue in the Nuba Mountains. The soil is very hard to dig and there are areas in southern Abu Jubaiyah locality that do not have ground water. Consequently, more than 30 villages in southern Abu Jubaiyah engage in a seasonal migration in which inhabitants abandon their homes and migrate to other areas in search of water. In response to water needs, SC/US has rehabilitated 16 hand pumps in Rashad, Talodi, and Abu Jubaiyah localities with funding from USAID's Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA).

3. (U) In a survey conducted from October to November 2006, CARE found that only eight out of 28 existing hafirs, or reservoirs, in

Abu Jubaiyah and Dilling localities were functioning. CARE also identified 10 locations in Dilling and eight locations in Abu Jubaiyah with potential for water programs. CARE received funding from USAID/OFDA to implement eight water harvesting structures in the two localities. At least four of these structures have been completed thus far. In addition, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) is funding 40 hafir rehabilitation projects throughout Southern Kordofan State.

CHALLENGES WITH CASH-FOR-WORK

¶4. (U) CARE is using a cash-for-work modality for construction and rehabilitation of the water harvesting structures in Dilling and Abu Jubaiyah localities. As displaced populations increasingly return to the Three Areas and Southern Sudan, cash-for-work programs help returnees to integrate and settle into communities. However, communities consider the current wage from CARE, at 300 Sudanese Dinar or approximately USD 1.50 per cubic meter, very low in comparison with the local market. As a result, physically fit workers have selected more competitive market opportunities in most of the villages visited, leading to some project delays.

¶5. (U) Additional constraints affecting cash-for-work programs in the Nuba Mountains include the hard to dig soil and a narrow timeframe to complete the projects. The harvest season utilizes most available labor through January, and the digging must be completed before the start of the long rainy season from June to November. In order to complete the current projects, CARE is planning on using machinery to complete work on one to two sites, and is considering increasing the cash-for-work payment for other sites, which may result in the completion of fewer projects. For future water harvesting structures in Nuba Mountains, the USAID/OFDA monitoring team recommends using machinery for digging and cash-for-work for other project-related activities.

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COMMUNITY WATER RESOURCE MANGEMENT

¶6. (U) CARE constructs or rehabilitates hafirs with a 15,000 cubic meter capacity or less, which are fully managed by communities. To boost local water resource management capacity, CARE has formed and trained committees on water resource management, environmental rehabilitation, and general hygiene issues. The water committees sell water and use the revenues for maintenance of the water facility.

GOVERNMENT WATER RESOURCE MANGEMENT

¶7. (U) The Rural Water Corporation (RWC), which falls under the State Ministry of Rural Development, is responsible for managing any hafir that has the capacity of 30,000 cubic meters or more. Some communities have criticized RWC for not investing enough in the maintenance of water structures. To address this problem, USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives (USAID/OTI) has worked closely with the RWC to build capacity to manage water points more effectively in the future. In Dilling locality, USAID/OTI provided the RWC office with an excavator, and a dump truck is scheduled to arrive in the coming weeks. RWC plans to use the excavator to facilitate completion of one to two CARE hafir projects in advance of the rainy season.

¶8. (U) In April, the local government, the community, and the State Ministry of Rural Development drafted an agreement to ensure that water resources would be properly managed and maintained. Following the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), aid agencies increasingly need to coordinate and work with nascent local governmental authorities. USAID encourages partners to consult with the State Ministry of Rural Development on water resource maintenance and management in the future.

CONCLUSIONS

19. (U) Modalities for water programs, including food-for-work, cash-for-work, machinery, or a combination thereof, should be critically reviewed to determine the most appropriate and cost-effective approach for future programs. Payment for cash-for-work should not be so high that it causes distortion in the local labor market or too low where it would be non-competitive. In the coming months, progress in increasing access to safe drinking water for returning populations, and constructive engagement with local government authorities, will increase stability in the Three Areas. USAID's implementing partners are working through the challenges with their water programs and cash-for-work initiatives. Lessons from their experiences may be relevant for other areas in Sudan.

FERNANDEZ